

Highly Acclaimed Exhibition Shahzia Sikander: Collective Behavior to Open at the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Cincinnati Art Museum

Monday October 21, 2024



The Illustrated Page Series #1, 2005–2006. Shahzia Sikander (Pakistani American, b. 1969). Opaque watercolor hand painting, gold leaf, and silkscreen pigment on paper; 143.8 x 182.7 x 3.8 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the Marion Stroud Fund for Contemporary Art on Paper in honor of Innis Howe Shoemaker, 2006-138-1a–b. © Shahzia Sikander, courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly, New York / Los Angeles. Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY

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Historical South Asian Art and Technique Reimagined Through a Contemporary Lens

CLEVELAND (October 21, 2024)—The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) and Cincinnati Art Museum (CAM) are pleased to announce that presentations of the exhibition *Shahzia Sikander: Collective Behavior* are on view concurrently in Ohio beginning on February 14, 2025. Offering a comprehensive presentation of the artist's career to date, the combined exhibitions unite nearly 100 artworks in multiple mediums made over the past 35 years. The exhibition premiered to international acclaim as a Collateral Event during the 60th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia—a globally significant platform for contemporary art—at the Palazzo Soranzo van Axel.

[The CAM exhibition](#) is a career-spanning presentation that, rather than proceeding chronologically, follows Shahzia Sikander's primary ideas and inquiries throughout her work, rooted as they are in a recurring lexicon of forms, figures, and ideas. The exhibition, the largest and most comprehensive presentation of the artist's career, explores Sikander's role as an American artist, a Pakistani artist, a Muslim artist, a feminist artist, and—perhaps most significantly—a global citizen engaging with a disrupted historical narrative. [The CMA presentation](#) of *Collective Behavior* focuses on Sikander's art in relation to historical South Asian works from the museum's collection that have inspired her. It carries forward in time the rich histories that are encompassed in the CMA's renowned South Asian collection, while situating contemporary artistic practice in relation to the global history that precedes it.

"*Collective Behavior* proposes kinship systems between experience, consciousness, race, and culture," said Sikander. "The works in this exhibition address many themes close to my heart, including centering women's narratives among uneven power relations and ongoing legacies of colonialism. Taking a global feminist perspective, I explore gender and body politics, examining the female form and feminine presence in art, religion, and society."

In Cleveland, *Collective Behavior* is curated by Emily Liebert, PhD, Lauren Rich Fine Curator of Contemporary Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Cincinnati's presentation is curated by Ainsley M. Cameron, PhD, curator of South Asian art, Islamic art, and antiquities at the Cincinnati Art Museum.

Collective Behavior is the latest of many collaborations—from commissions to exhibitions—between Cameron and Sikander. "It is an absolute pleasure to work with Shahzia on this exhibition. She has a boundless capacity for reinvention, which has repeatedly drawn me and many others to her work. She not only transformed South Asian painting histories by bringing this technique into dialogue with contemporary ideas and aesthetics, but she continues to iterate on these legacies and push her own practice in new

directions, adding materials and mediums to her already expansive repertoire,” said Cameron. “*Collective Behavior* illustrates Shahzia’s artistic innovations and fully considers the multivalence of her practice.”

“For more than three decades, Sikander has been animating South Asian visual histories through a contemporary perspective,” said Liebert. “Her work reimagines the past for our present moment, proposing new and deeply relevant narratives that cross time and place, helping to see with fresh eyes the world we inhabit.”

Sikander is widely celebrated for subverting central and South Asian manuscript painting traditions and launching the form known today as *neo-miniature*. Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Sikander earned a BFA in 1991 from the National College of Arts in Lahore. Sikander received her MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1995. Over the subsequent more than 20 years, Sikander’s practice—which has expanded to include paintings, media work, and most recently, sculpture—has been pivotal in showcasing art of the South Asian diaspora as a contemporary American tradition. Sikander has been the recipient of many notable awards, including most recently the Pollock Prize for Creativity in 2023, the Fukuoka Arts and Culture Prize in 2022, the Asia Society Award for Significant Contribution to Contemporary Art in 2015, a medal of Art by the US Department of State in 2012, and a MacArthur Fellowship in 2006. Sikander serves on the boards of Art21, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and is a member of the Asian American Arts Alliance’s artist council. In spring 2023, Sikander served as an adjunct professor at Columbia University’s Institute for Comparative Literature and Society and in spring 2024 as an adjunct professor at Brown University’s Department of the History of Art and Architecture. She is currently an adjunct professor for fall 2024 at Columbia University and the Alan Kanzer Artist in Residence at Columbia’s Zuckerman Institute of the mind, brain, and behavior.

At the CMA, *Shahzia Sikander: Collective Behavior* is on view in the Julia and Larry Pollock Focus Gallery (gallery 010) from Friday, February 14, through Sunday, June 8, 2025. The exhibition is free; no ticket is required.

At CAM, *Shahzia Sikander: Collective Behavior* is on view in the Western & Southern Galleries (232 and 233) from Friday, February 14, through Sunday, May 4, 2025. Tickets are \$12, with discounted rates for students, children, and seniors. Save \$2 when purchasing tickets online. Admission is free for members. The exhibition is free for nonmembers every Thursday evening from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.; Friday, February 28, March 28, and April 25, during Art After Dark; and on Saturdays, March 1 and April 5, during CAM Kids Day. Photography is permitted, but no flash.

Exhibition Catalogue

Shahzia Sikander: Collective Behavior is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue, published by Monacelli, featuring scholarly and poetic responses to Sikander's work by contributors including Manan Ahmed, Aruna D'Souza, Bhanu Kapil, Rosalind C. Morris, Fred Moten, and Victoria Sung. The definitive publication on the internationally acclaimed artist, the catalogue is available for preorder this fall and releases in February 2025 to coincide with the Ohio openings.

To accompany the publication of the catalogue, Artspace is releasing a limited-edition print of Sikander's *Her-Vimana* to support the presentations of *Collective Behavior* at CAM and the CMA, to be released in February 2025. To inquire about purchasing the limited-edition print, email advisor@artspace.com.

Complementary Programming—Cincinnati Art Museum

Check cincinnatiartmuseum.org as additional programming and details are added to the calendar. The schedule is subject to change.

Members Opening

Thursday, February 13, 2025, 5:00–7:00 p.m.

Free

Members are invited to view the exhibition before it opens to the public. Enjoy snacks and a cash bar in the Great Hall. Please check in at the visitors services desk.

Tenth Annual Asian Art Lecture: *Shahzia Sikander: Collective Behavior*

Sunday, April 27, 2025. 2:00 p.m.

Copresented by the Cincinnati Art Museum and CAAS in honor of CAM's exhibition, Shahzia Sikander delivers a richly illustrated lecture followed by a conversation moderated by CAM curator Ainsley M. Cameron. Registration is required.

Exhibition Support

The Cincinnati Art Museum exhibition is made possible through the generosity of the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Additional support comes from the John and Dorothy Hermanies Fund; the Louise H. and David S. Ingalls Foundation; the Albert B. Cord Charitable Foundation; Pace Prints, New York; Twelve Gates Arts; anonymous donors; Shakila T. Ahmad; Tanu Bhati; Saba A. Chughtai; Julie and Abhijit Desai; Liz Grubow and Jerry Kathman; JoLynn and Byron Gustin; Syed Zubair Haq; Alina Khan; Zofeen Khan; Samar Kaukab and Haroon Moghul; Helen Little; Soumya S. Patnaik; Ron Pizzuti; Kristi Nelson and Stewart Goldman; and Sara M. Vance Waddell.

Shahzia Sikander's two principal commercial galleries, Sean Kelly Gallery and Pilar Corrias Gallery, have been invaluable supporters and collaborators.

The Cleveland Museum of Art exhibition is made possible with support from the Junaid Family Foundation and Herb and Judy Wainer.

This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

All exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum of Art are underwritten by the CMA Fund for Exhibitions. Principal annual support is provided by Michael Frank and the late Pat Snyder, the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation, the John and Jeanette Walton Exhibition Fund, and Margaret and Loyal Wilson. Major annual support is provided by the late Dick Blum and Harriet Warm and the Frankino-Dodero Family Fund for Exhibitions Endowment. Generous annual support is provided by two anonymous donors, Gini and Randy Barbato, Gary and Katy Brahler, Cynthia and Dale Brogan, Dr. Ben and Julia Brouhard, Brenda and Marshall Brown, Gail and Bill Calfee, Joseph and Susan Corsaro, Richard and Dian Disantis, the Jeffery Wallace Ellis Trust in memory of Lloyd H. Ellis Jr., Leigh and Andy Fabens, Florence Kahane Goodman, Janice Hammond and Edward Hemmelgarn, Robin Heiser, the late Marta and the late Donald M. Jack Jr., Eva and Rudolf Linnebach, the William S. Lipscomb Fund, Bill and Joyce Litzler, the Roy Minoff Family Fund, Lu Anne and the late Carl Morrison, Jeffrey Mostade and Eric Nilson and Varun Shetty, Tim O'Brien and Breck Platner, William J. and Katherine T. O'Neill, Henry Ott-Hansen, Christine Fae Powell, Michael and Cindy Resch, William Roj and Mary Lynn Durham, Betty T. and David M. Schneider, Sandra K. Stemen, Paula and Eugene Stevens, the Womens Council of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and Claudia Woods and David Osage.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is funded in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture.

This exhibition was supported in part by the Ohio Arts Council, which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovation. One of the leading encyclopedic art museums in the United States, the CMA is recognized for its award-winning open access program—which provides free digital access to images and information about works in the museum’s collection—and free of charge to all. The museum is located in the University Circle neighborhood with two satellite locations on Cleveland’s west side: the Community Arts Center and Transformer Station.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs, and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org.

About the Cincinnati Art Museum

One of the oldest arts institutions in the United States, and the first purpose-built art museum west of the Allegheny Mountains, the Cincinnati Art Museum features a diverse, encyclopedic art collection of more than 73,000 works spanning 6,000 years. In addition to displaying its own broad collection, the museum conducts extensive research and creates and organizes several exhibitions each year. It also hosts national and international traveling exhibitions. Through these critical projects and art-related programs, activities, and special events, the museum contributes to a more vibrant Cincinnati by inspiring its people and connecting its communities.

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to ArtsWave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence, and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as its members. Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from the Rosenthal Family Foundation. Exhibition pricing may vary. Generous support for the museum’s

extended Thursday hours is provided by Art Bridges Foundation's Access for All program. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free. More information is available at cincinnatiartmuseum.org.